

RE: Docket #FAA-2003-14402

May 22, 2003

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in opposition to the proposed restructuring of the Houston Class B airspace that would lower the floor of the Class B from 4000ft to 3000ft over the Sack-O-Grande airport (9XS9). I am both a professional airline pilot and a recreational aerobatic pilot. I have been employed as a pilot with Continental Airlines for 13 years and have been flying the MD-80 based out of the George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH) for the last 5 years.

I am opposed to the restructuring for the following reasons:

- 1) Such restructuring would effectively shut down the Aerobatic Box at Sack-O-Grande.
- 2) Sack-O-Grande is the ONLY designated Aerobatic Box within the greater Houston area.
- 3) Houston has a very large pilot population with major pilot bases for both Continental Airlines and Southwest Airlines, and NASA's operations at Ellington in addition to a large contingent of General Aviation pilots.
- 4) Many of these pilots (both professional and private), like myself, pursue aerobatics in order to continually improve their piloting skills so that they will be safer, more proficient, and more technically competent pilots on a daily basis.
- 5) Without the use of the Aerobatic Box at Sack-O-Grande, these pilots will be forced to practice in unrestricted airspace without the safety benefit of a structured and designated aerobatic practice area.

In addition, it is my understanding that the reasoning being used for this restructuring is the addition of the third east/west runway at IAH. As an airline pilot who flies in and out of IAH on a regular basis, I fail to see a need for lowering the floor of the Class B for the following reasons:

- 1) The third east/west runway at IAH is in line with the two existing east/west runways.
- 2) The current airspace structure is more than adequate to allow normal descents and approaches to runways 8 and 9 at IAH.
- 3) There is no reason why the new east/west runway will require an earlier descent or lower approach path than runways 8 and 9 presently require.
- 4) The new east/west runway is located to the north of the current runways 8 and 9 and, therefore, is even further removed from the airspace above Sack-O-Grande.
- 5) As all Houston-based Continental pilots know, the favored arrival runways at IAH are 26 and 27. Only on the relatively rare occasions when the winds exceed a 10-knot component out of the east are runways 8 and 9 used.
- 6) Sack-O-Grande is 25 nautical miles from IAH. There is no reason for either departure or arrival traffic from IAH to be below the current Class B floor at 4000 ft at that distance from IAH.

Since I realize there may be other factors involved in this airspace restructuring of which I am not aware, I would like to propose an alternative solution. If it is absolutely necessary to lower the floor of the outer ring of the IAH Class B to 3000 ft, then I would implore you to provide for a cutout around the Sack-O-Grande airport where the floor would remain at 4000 ft. Such a cutout currently exists south of the Hobby airport (HOU) around the Wolfe (3TA1) and Alvin (6R5) airports. A similar cutout would allow the continued use of the aerobatic box at Sack-O-Grande. The loss of this aerobatic box would be a great loss to all pilots in the Houston area.

If you have any questions or I can provide any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

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